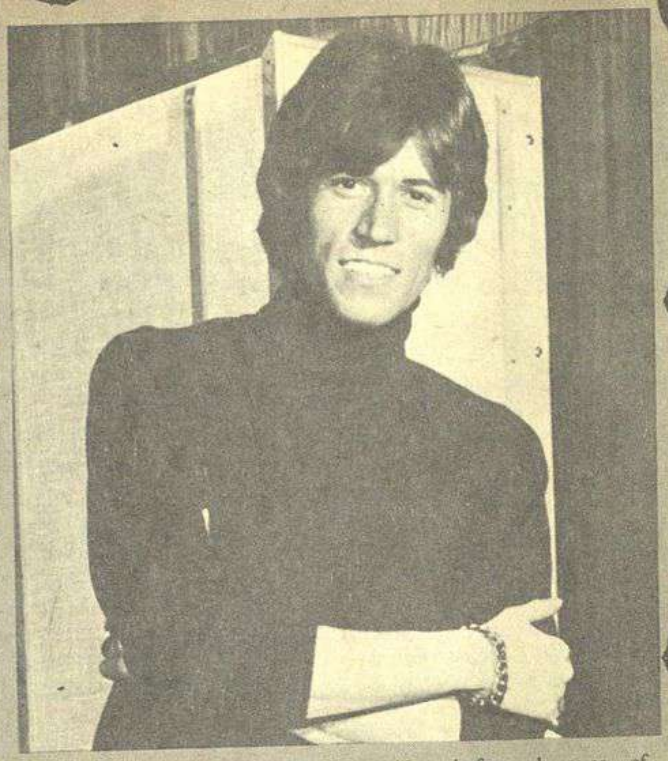
THIS IS OUR LIFE



Barry continues writing for you—telling you in his own words the story of The Bee Gees.

WHAT we noticed, one summery day last year, was a picture splashed across the daily papers of a girl who'd chained herself to the railings outside Buckingham Palace. Must admit I thought she was probably a crank—a chick who wanted votes for schoolgirls or something like that. But then I got to reading the caption and looking a bit closer at the placard she was clutching. . . .

It was about US. 'Save The Bee Gees' . . . 'Don't Deport The Top Pop Group.' Add to that a procession of fans peaceably marching through London's West End with similar posters, and a mountain of fan-mail that looked like an Everest of envelopes, and you had an interesting situation!

What had happened was this. We'd had a couple of big hits, earned about half-a-million dollars, become an important export—and the British Government wanted to break us up. We Gibbs were in the clear for we were British citizens. But Colin and Vince were Aussies, born and bred. And they had work permit problems and had been ordered to leave Britain by September 17.

Some people said: "Well, let 'em go. Get in two more boys." But we wouldn't have that. We were all determined to fight for what we thought was right—and anyway they were all very much part of our scene then. The fans were great. They backed us up to the hilt. If the Government regulations made us go all cold, then the fans gave us a warm glow, deep down inside.

We thought about quitting Britain and settling in America. Vince and Colin even thought about becoming Spanish citizens and then re-applying for work permits to be with us in Britain. Sounds crazy, I know, but it was easier for a Continental to be let in to work here than it was for Australians from the Commonwealth.

The whole thing made us feel sick. Back Britain—that was the cry. So there we were, earning money from exports, and in our wilder moments we could see ourselves being invited to a slap-up meal at Buckingham Palace, maybe! Suppose YOU were told you couldn't see some of your best mates again . . . well, how would you feel about it?

Maybe it was that *Massachusetts* got to number one, but in the end all the arguments and pleas worked out and Colin and Vince got what they call a 'stay of execution.' They were told they'd have to go in November. Then that faded away and now, fingers crossed please!, there's no talk of us having to be split up.

Know what was worst about it? The hint that our two mates were suspicious characters. There are always people who'll read the most vicious theory into anything and this bit about 'Bee Gees Banned' gave those knockers a field-day. "No smoke without fire," said they. "They've obviously been up to something!" Smug talk which made us more angry than ever. Fact is that Colin and Vince were up against sheer Red Tape.

So that summer of last year was a right old drag. We went on working, doing TV shows and broadcasts and the odd short tour, but it all seemed pointless. If the government was going to bust us up as a group, then why bother! Colin, who'd had troubles before because of being such a youngster when he started in films, kept saying he'd go back home, saddle a horse and work on a sheep station somewhere.

But as I say, the fans were behind us. Maybe YOU wrote a letter of protest around that time. If so, here's a heart-felt message of thanks. Sometimes you feel it's a pretty lonely life being in pop music, but when the chips are down there are so many marvellous people who are prepared to come in and help.

Needless to say, our manager, Bob Stigwood was working like a demon during this difficult time. Amazing man, Bob. There's a real friendship between all of us and him now. He doesn't tell us what SHOULD be done . . . he suggests. That makes us feel good and we agree, but we feel we had a lot to do with the decision!

They say it never rains but it pours. Just as we were getting out of the permit problems, brother Robin got into . . . a train smash. That was the Hither Green disaster, a terrible smash-up not far out of London one Sunday night, He was on his way home from Hastings along with his girl-friend, Mollie Hullis. Believe me, he was very lucky to escape without injury, but he was terribly shaken up.

His good luck, though, led to a general change of luck for all of us. I'll tell you how next week. And a little bit of the latest behind-the-scenes gossip!